DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 343 657 PS 020 165

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TITLE School Age Child Care: A Preliminary Report.
PUB DATE Jun 91
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (Kingston, Ontario, Canada, June, 1991). Research funded by CCIF (Canada) and FCAR (Quebec).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Child Caregivers; Comparative Analysis; *Day Care Centers; *Educational Quality; Family Characteristics; *Family Day Care; Family Size; Foreign Countries; Interprofessional Relationship; *Kindergarten; Mothers; Preschool Teachers; Primary Education; *School Age Day Care; *Social Behavior; Social Development; Social Differences; Socioeconomic Status; Young Children
IDENTIFIERS *Canada; Day Care Effects; Home Child Care

ABSTRACT

This paper examines on-site, school-age child care and the relationship between attendance at on-site, after-school child care programs and familial, environmental, and developmental factors. Topics discussed include: (1) the quality of school-based environments in kindergarten and child care; (2) the socioeconomic status and size of families of children attending after-school child care programs; (3) the social and play behaviors of children in day care and children in home care; and (4) the degree of communication between kindergarten teachers and child care educators in on-site, after-school child care centers. The findings reported represent a small portion of a comprehensive study conducted over a 3-year period by four primary researchers in Montreal and Quebec City. Subjects were 75 children who attended school-based child care and 69 children who went home after school. There were more single parent families and fewer children per family in the day care group than the home care group. It was found that a select population used school-based child care and that the quality of school-based child care varied within and between schools. Day care history seemed to be an important factor in a child's social development. There were substantial differences between those who worked in kindergartens and those who worked in child care programs. Contains 38 references. (LB)

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# SCHOOL AGE CHILD CARE: A PRELIMINARY REPORT

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The research is funded by CCIF (Canada) and FCAR (Québec). This paper was presented at the Annual Conference of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education. Kingston, Ontario. June, 1991.

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The focus of this paper is on-site school age child care and the relationship between attendance of on-site after school child care programs and familial, environmental and developmental factors. The findings reported here represent a small portion of a comprehensive study conducted over a three year period by four principle researchers in Montreal and Quebec City. The issues to be presented are the quality of school based environments (kindergarten and child care), the socioeconomic status and size of families of children attending after school child care programs as well as those who return home to mother, the relationship between day care histories and teacher ratings of social behaviour, the social and play behaviours of day care versus home care children and the degree of communication between kindergarten teachers and child care educators in the on-site after school child care centres.

School age child care programs have been developed to meet the increasing demand for after school care for children of dual career and single parent families. When these families formed a small percentage of the work force, it was necessary for them to make individual care arrangements for the hours between the end of the school day and the completion of their own work day. Many depended upon neighbors, members of the extended family or community center programs, while others permitted their children to return home without supervision. Within the past ten years new after school care options have made it possible for families to choose from a broad array of alternatives to self-care. These more formal child care arrangements include sitter care, center care within the community, school-based child care, and a variety of multiple, extracurricular activities that serve as "time fillers".

To date there have been very few studies published which have examined after school care programs and there is a definite dearth of studies of on-site after school child care programs. However, in one of the more interesting research projects Vandell & Corasaniti (1988) compared third grade children in four different types of after school arrangements - (1) home to mother, (2) latchkey, (3) off-site after school child care, and (4) sitter care and found that children attending off-site child care centres received more negative peer nominations, had lower academic grades and had lower standardized test scores than mother-care or latchkey children.

Those in sitter care received more negative peer nomination than those in latchkey or mother- care. There were no differences between latchkey and mother-care children in sociometric nominations, academic grades, standardized test scores, conduct grades, self competence and teacher rating.

There are four factors which may have been responsible for the poor findings regarding the child care group. Parents who selected child care may have known that their children required adult supervision, thus the day care group may have been distinctly different from the other children prior to their enrolment in the child care program. As only 11% of the total sample attended attended the off-site centre, the day care children were in a minority. This, coupled with the fact that the third grade children had negative attitudes toward day care attendance, may have strongly influenced the results of the study. A fourth factor was the quality of the off-site after school centres. Vandell & Corasaniti indicated that the quality of the centres in their study was questionable. As most had large numbers of children, a small staff with minimal training and limited age-appropriate activities and were proprietary in style, the school age attenders could certainly have been as negatively affected as preschool children are by the quality of care (McCartney, Scarr, Phillips, Grajek, & Schwarz, 1982).

The after school option missing from the Vandell & Corasaniti study is the on-site school based child care centre. These centres are located on school premises and have hours of operation which may vary in accordance with the needs of the parents. The majority of the centres have three distinct periods of operation: an early morning session prior to the beginning of formal school classes, a midday period which signals the beginning of the kindergarten child's after school care and is the time when the elementary school age children join the kindergarten children for lunch, and the end of the elementary school day when the grade school children enter the centre for their after school care program. Most centres remain open until six -thirty in the evening to accommodate parents' work schedules.

The convenience of this arrangement eliminates the 'organizational' problems commonly associated with the other forms of after school care. These include transportation to the off-site location, availability of the educator, appropriateness of the program for the age of the children and the

coordination of days with activities so that equipment and supplies brought from home correspond to the scheduled extracurricular activity. The convenience of the arrangement may be an important factor influencing selection of on-site after school child care, rather than selection on the basis of a child requiring more adult supervision after school. The high visibility and minority issues associated with day care attendance in Vandell & Corasaniti's study may not be important in on-site centres, as many children attend the programs and they are not visibly different from the other children who leave the classroom at the end of the school day. The quality of care provided can be an issue no matter what after school arrangement the child is in. Thus, quality of after school child care centres and the appropriate tools with which to conduct the assessment of quality are important foci for future research.

The results of the Vandell & Corasaniti study raise a number of questions regarding the relationship of **on-site** after school child care attendance to children's popularity, social competence, academic achievement and language development. Several other questions arise which were not addressed by Vandell & Corasaniti. Who uses school age child care? How do school age centres differ (quality) and what is the effect of quality differences on children? How do teachers and child care educators relate to one another? Are their programs complementary or disparate? What are the effects of child care experiences on children's social development? The projects described below attempt to answer these questions and provide insight into the differences which may exist between children who attend after school child care programs and those who return home to mother at the end of the school day. The studies represent an exploration into the lives of children who attend child care and kindergarten concurrently and those who have never had any day care experience.

Familial and Environmental Factors in School Age Child Care

Baillargeon, Arenas, Desmarais, & Larouche (1991) studied the relationship of the quality of kindergarten and child care environments to children's social and language development. In this study one control variable was socioeconomic status as measured by the Socioeconomic Index

of Occupations in Canada ( Blishen et al., 1987), and the independent variables were kindergarten quality and day care quality measured by the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS) (Harms & Clifford, 1980), and kindergarten teachers' attitudes assessed via the Problems in School Questionnaire (Deci et al., 1981). The dependent variables included oral language assessed using the Preschool Language Scale (Zimmerman et al., 1979), written language measured with an instrument developed by Belanger & La Brecque (1984), social development determined by means of the Social Competence Scale (Kohn, Parnes & Rosman, 1972 ), and peer ratings gathered as an assessment of each child's social status within his/her peer group.

The researchers created two groups of subjects-those who attended school based child care (N=75) and those who went home to mother after school (N=69). Subsequent analyses of demographic information showed that the two groups differed on two family variables- structure (single or two parent families) and size (average number of children per family). There were more single parent families in the day care group (child care = 23%; home = 7%) and there were fewer children per family in the day care population as compared to the home care group ( child care X=1.89; home X=2.49). These variables must be taken into account when analyzing populations of this nature.

Preliminary analyses revealed that the concurrent attendance of kindergarten classes with after school child care classes is an interesting phenomenon as the child must cope with two different sets of non-parental adult educators, as well as two potentially different non-familial environments. Rules, regulations and expectations within each environment may be significantly different and the child must be sufficiently flexible to adjust to each one quickly. One would hope that both environments offer high quality care as the quality of a preschool day care environment is positively related to social competence and language development (McCartney, 1984; Phillips, McCartney & Scarr, 1987; Schliecker, White & Jacobs, 1991).

Baillargeon et al. used the ECERS to evaluate the quality of kindergarten and after school child care centres and their findings revealed interesting results. It would seem that when regulations are in place, a greater

percentage of institutions respond positively than when there are few regulations. The kindergarten classrooms must conform to norms established by the Department of Education of the province of Quebec. An assessment of the quality of 19 of these classroom environments in the Quebec City area indicated that 79% (N=15) of the kindergartens were rated as GOOD; whereas, the child care centres which had few standardized regulations to adhere to only 50% (N=7) were rated as GOOD. This may create a problem for the children who attend a good quality kindergarten for a portion of the day (2 1/2 hours) and move on to the day care setting where they may spend upwards of 6 hours per day. A child who is exposed to inconsistencies between the quality of the kindergarten and child care may be at risk, as would the child who is in consistently low quality arrangements. However, the child who attends two high quality environments concurrently would be at an advantage.

In light of these preliminary findings, Baillargeon et al. are analyzing their data to ascertain the relationship between attending kindergartens and after school child care centres of varying qualities and children's social and language development and academic skills.

Social Development in School Age Care

While Baillargeon et al. have explored social behaviour as related to environmental quality, Adessky and White(1991) have examined the aggressive behaviour of children in kindergarten in relation to a child's day care history prior to school entry and have conducted a careful scrutiny of family demographic information.

In 1978, Belsky and Steinberg characterized children attending day care as aggressive. Since that time this conclusion has been challenged, though no consensus about the effects of group care on aggressive behaviour has been reached. Investigators have suggested that aggression may be related to quality of child care ( Baillargeon & Betsalel-Presser, 1988) or unclear definitions which confuse aggression and assertion (Vlietstra, 1981) rather than to child care attendance per se. Adessky and White (1991) set out to examine whether teachers would rate children who were currently attending

after school care as more aggressive than children currently in home care arrangements. These investigators measured quality of current child care environments. As well, they utilized a modified version of a teacher rating scale developed by Vandell and her colleagues (Vandell & Corasaniti, 1988) which clearly sampled aggressive rather than assertive behaviours. Items included behaviours like hits, kicks, bites, teases is defiant, destroys property, fights with others, gets angry easily and bothers others.

In reviewing the background information supplied by parents, it was noted that one difference between school age care and home care children was their preschool child care arrangements. Children in after school child care were very likely to have had some preschool day care experience, usually an average of about two years, but these children had not used group care exclusively. Many had some combination of sitter, relative, home and group care prior to kindergarten. The concept of a "day care child" as one who enters group care early and stays in group care is inaccurate because this situation rarely occurred in this middle class sample. Multi-care backgrounds were more common than consistent use of sitter, home or group care. Most impressive was the heterogeneity of preschool group experience, even though the quality of these previous experiences was not known. The number of months of group care for children in the Adessky & White's sample ranged from 0 to 57; children experienced from 1 to 3 types of care and changed type of care between 0 and 6 times; children entered group care arrangements anywhere from 5 months to 71 months.

Given such information about the children in this sample, Adessky & White speculated that those children with extensive preschool experience, who had been exposed to multiple settings, and who had changed type of care many times might be more likely to show aggression than children with less group experience and more stable arrangements. This hypothesis was confirmed for kindergarten girls, but not for boys. Boys were rated as more aggressive than girls, but the aggression ratings received by boys were not related to past child care arrangements. Girls were, on average, less aggressive, but greater aggression was related to greater time spent in group settings as a preschool child.

One interpretation of these results is that girls who spend more time in groups observe more aggressive behaviour in boys and may incorporate such behaviour into their own repertoires. As well, though sex segregation even at early ages is recognized as commonplace, girls in day care centres may find that they must behave in more aggressive ways in order to obtain their share of materials and attention. Finally, it is possible that parents select group care for those girls who are more "outgoing", are able to "hold their own", or are more aggressive. Such interpretations are speculative and require longitudinal research for verification. Nonetheless, they serve to underline the possibility that for girls, day care may be related to the expression of more aggressive behaviour.

In summary, while on average, kindergarten children currently attending after school day care were not rated as more aggressive than home reared children, greater group experience was related to higher ratings of aggression in girls. It seems possible that greater group experience involves more opportunity to observe aggression and rough and tumble play in boys, and may allow girls to incorporate these behaviours into their own repertoires. Further longitudinal research is needed to verify such explanations, and to determine if selection of group care is more likely for assertive girls.

Extensive group experience may have different effects on particular aspects of children's social development. The popularity of kindergarten children who either attend school based child care or return home to mother after school may be related to the amount and quality of their group experiences. Montpetit and Jacobs (1991) examined peer popularity in the kindergarten classroom in relationship to the tone of the children's interactions and the complexity of their play styles to determine whether after school child care attenders were more socially skilled and more popular among their peers in the kindergarten.

Two studies which have looked at the effects of after school child care on children's peer relations have yielded conflicting results. Howes, Olenick & Der-Kiureghian (1987) found that children who attended after school child care concurrently with kindergarten were more socially skilled than those who returned home to mother. However, Vandell & Corasaniti (1988) found that third grade children who attended off-site day care

centres after school received more negative peer nominations than those who returned home to their mothers. These conflicting findings can be explained by looking at the ages of the children studied, the quality of the day care environments and the location of the day cares. Howes et al. studied kindergarten children for whom child care attendance did not have negative associations, while Vandell examined a group of third graders for whom non-parental group care had negative connotations. Howes et al. looked at good quality after school care, while Vandell et al. studied children who were in "proprietary care". Howes et al.'s subjects attended a school based child care program, while Vandell et al.'s subjects, who formed a small proportion of their sample, were transported to another location after school causing them to stand out from the crowd and be noticed for the lack of freedom in their after school arrangement. These differences in the studies may explain the conflicting results.

Since children who attend a child care centre after school have a greater opportunity for peer interaction, and as the peer group is important in helping children to develop good social skills, one could hypothesize that after school day care attenders enrolled in a high quality program would be more socially skilled than those who return home to their parents at the end of the school day. Within the child care centres they have the opportunity to play and initiate interactions with their peers, to maintain the interactions and attempt to resolve social problems. Research findings indicate that children who exhibit more positive interactions with their peers tend to be more popular than children who display more negative peer interactions (Coie & Kupersmidt, 1983; McGuire, 1973; Rubin, 1983; Rubin & Daniels-Beirness, 1983) and that children who have attended day care centres exhibit more positive interactions than those who have not had any day care experience (Field et al., 1988; Schindler et al., 1987; Vleitstra, 1981). Thus one hypothesis of this project was that children's who attended after school child care centres would exhibit a more positive tone in their interactions than those who went home to mother at the end of the school day.

As children who have had day care experience exhibit more complex play styles than children who have never been to day care ( Field et al., 1988; Rubenstein & Howes, 1989; Schindler et al., 1987) and there is a positive relationship between the display of more complex play styles and

popularity ( Dodge, 1983; Ladd, 1983; Marshall & McCandless, 1957; Rubin, 1983), the second hypothesis was that the children who had more group experience (those who attended the after school child care centres) would display more complex play styles in the kindergarten and would be more popular than those who went home to mother after school.

This study included 63 children ranging in age from 62 to 77 months. Twenty-eight attended after school child care and 35 returned home to their mother. In this study SES was determined by the Hollingshead Four Factor Index of Social Status (1975), sociometric status was measured by peer ratings (Asher et al., 1979), teacher's perception of the child's self competence was obtained through an adaptation of the Vandell & Corasaniti rating scale (1988), receptive language was measured using a French translation of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test ( Dunn, 1981), and naturalistic observations were gathered according to the Parten/Piaget system to record complexity of play styles and tone of interaction Smilansky, 1968), and the after school child care centres were evaluated using an adaptation of the ECERS (Harms & Clifford, 1980). As school age child care centres deal with older children whose needs are not the same as preschoolers, the environmental rating scale used to measure quality in these centres should reflect these differences if it is to be considered valid. Thus, the School Age Child Care Rating Scale was designed to accomplish this task (Jacobs, White & Chartrand, 1990).

Although the two kindergarten classrooms used in this study were within the "GOOD" range on the ECERS, there were significant differences between the two classrooms which necessitated analyzing each classroom population separately. In School 2 there was a significant difference for peer ratings between the child care attenders (N=13) and those who went home to mother (N=21) after school. The day care group had a significantly higher peer rating than the home care group. The day care children in this school appeared to be far more active in the classroom than the home reared group. They engaged in more functional, constructive and dramatic group play than did the home reared group and they also engaged in more positive and negative interactions with their peers. In School 1 there were no differences in peer ratings between the two groups, however, there was a significant

difference between day care (N=15) and home care (N=14) children for positive/prosocial behaviour. The more time children had spent in preschool day care the less prosocial was the tone of their interactions. As the results of this study may have been influenced by the small sample size, this team is currently increasing the number of subjects in the sample and will re-analyze these data using the substantially larger sample.

Studies have shown that child care educators in the child care environments make a difference in the social and language development of the preschool age child ( McCartney, 1984; Phillips, McCartney & Scarr, 1987). The after school care child has two sets of adults tending to his/her developmental needs. As the child is the constant moving between the two environments established by these adults, he/she must adapt to the differences which exist between the two. Communication among the teachers and the educators might facilitate the daily transitions that children must make.

Teacher/Educator Communication

Betsalel-Presser, Joncas, Jacques, Phaneuf, Rivest & Brunet (1991) designed a study in which they explored the communication among kindergarten teachers and child care educators in the schools which offered after school child care programs. The findings of previous studies (Adessky & White, 1991; Baillargeon & Betsalel-Presser, 1988; Betsalel-Presser, Vineberg- Jacobs, Romano-White & Baillargeon, 1988; Betsalel-Presser, Baillargeon, White & Jacobs, 1990) indicated that teachers and child care educators in different settings had preconceived notions about each others' environment, goals, training and programs, but did not have any verification of the validity of these notions. This created a bias which seemed to influence the kindergarten teacher's attitude regarding the day care child's ability to adjust to classroom rules and regulations ( Betsalel-Presser, Lavoie & Jacques, 1990). Betsalel-Presser et al. designed a questionnaire which elicited demographic information related to training and focussed on the type of communication which existed between the educator and the teacher. A total of 130 questionnaires were mailed. In all 61 kindergarten teachers and 65 child care educators responded. They represented 9 school boards in the Montreal area.

The majority of respondents in this study were French Canadian females. The age distribution varied widely with 77% of the child care educators being between 23 and 39 years of age, while 80% of the teachers were between 40 and 56 years of age. Information regarding educational background indicated that 70% of the teachers had a Bachelors and 6% had a Masters Degree. Fifty-three percent (53%) of the child care educators had a special college degree or certificate in Early Childhood Education and 31% had a Bachelors degree.

There was a significant difference between the two groups in terms of experience in the field of Early Childhood Education. Seventy percent ( 70% ) of the child care educators indicated that they had less than 7 years of experience, while 88% of the teachers had been between 17 and 36 years of experience. Seventy percent (70%) of the child care educators had been employed at the same school between 3 to 10 years, while 38% of the teachers had spent 12 to 28 years in their school.

The teachers and child care educators responded to questions which were categorized into the following groups: 1) opportunities to meet with each other; 2) content of communications; 3) knowledge about children attending both programs; 4) knowledge about their counterpart's educational practices; 5) sources of information; 6) level of their relationship; 7) level of satisfaction with the present relationship; 8) sources of difficulty in establishing lines of communication between the teachers and the child care educators and 9) suggestions from kindergarten and school based child child care educators for the improvement of communication.

With reference to the teacher and educator's perceptions about opportunities for planning or meeting informally, there seemed to be a consensus that it was possible to meet before the children's arrival, however, less than 40% met . Communication took place on an informal basis when walking the children from one program to another. This seemed to be a common practice in most of the centres. The data from the questionnaire indicated that both groups had similar perceptions about the content of the communication that did occur.

An analysis of these data indicated that the children's behaviour constituted the main topic of communication for over 65% of the subjects,

while with the sharing of information gleaned from or imparted to parents was the next most common focus of communication for 35% of the subjects. It should be noted that regulations in school and class were discussed by only 32% of the subjects. Moreover, issues concerning difficulties encountered by the children who attended both programs were subjects of consultation for only 30% of the subjects. The most revealing and startling statistic was that 85% of the teachers and educators rarely, if ever, talked about:

- educational approaches used in their classes
- ideas about activities
- program activities that could have been complementary
- room arrangements and materials available
- common interests (books, conferences, etc.)

One would expect that when adults who work with the same children in different programs, they would try to learn about children's experiences and behaviour in the other program. However, the results of this questionnaire indicate that only 50% of the teachers and educators were cognizant of the important life events of the children who attended both programs: birthdays, parties, outings, etc. Seventy-five percent of the subjects knew very little about the specific child's experiences in the complementary program. This included information about interactions with peers and adults, difficulties related to the activities and events that may have had a marked effect on them (conflicts or punishments). In addition 85% of the teachers and child care educators knew very little about the children's favorite or less preferred activities in the complementary program. These findings may provide an explanation for the kindergarten teachers' concerns about the repetition of activities that the day care children commonly complain about.

In order to facilitate transitions between the two programs that are attended concurrently by young children, the adults in charge should know about one another's educational practices. However, in this study 85% of the teachers and child care educators indicated that they knew very little about their colleague's educational practices such as:

- what the children are permitted to do
- how they motivate the children
- how they communicate with parents

- how they solve children's conflicts
- their approach with "difficult" children
- their educational goals

A set of questions within the questionnaire explored the teachers' and educators' perceptions of their working relationships. It was possible to identify three types of relationships with different levels of involvement 1) acquaintance; 2) exchange and 3) collaboration. The perceptions of both groups differed with 15% of the teachers and 22% of the educators rating their relationship at the acquaintance level; 60% of the teachers and 42 % of the child care educators defined their relationship as being in the exchange category and 25% of the teachers and 56% of the child care educators rated their relationship as collaborative. When asked who initiated the communication, the large majority expressed that both were responsible.

Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the teachers and 64% of the educators expressed satisfaction with the current relationship. When asked to identify the main obstacles to communication, 77% of the teachers and 61% of the educators indicated that it was their work hours. When asked to list what they would expect to gain from improved communication between teachers and educator 52% of the teachers and 63% of the educators indicated that they expected to learn more about each other's settings and programs and 40% of them expressed an interest in having the school principal facilitate the communicative and collaborative process between the teachers and the educators.

The results of this questionnaire illustrate the need to encourage opportunities for teachers and educators to interact with each other so that they may facilitate children's transition from one milieu to another and thereby increase the unique educational value of each program. Both teachers and educators were aware that a lack of knowledge about each other's educational practices and programs could stifle the children's motivation to participate in classroom activities, especially those that were repetitive and routine activities offered in both programs.

One might speculate that the children's adaptation to each program could be improved through better communication and collaboration among the staff by planning complementary and different activities. The questionnaire results showed that teachers and educators recognized the value of communication for purposes of increased program participation and the opportunity to exchange ideas with other adults within the school setting. However, the obstacles to better communication are a real factor and it is essential that those working in the school community recognize the need for child care educators to participate in pedagogical days and/or to have some free time for planning programs along with the teachers. Recognition as professionals has continued to elude the child care educators. This may be due to the difference in age, training, years of experience between teachers and child care educators.

Based upon the results of this study, a new project was designed to enhance cooperative work among teachers and child care educators. The team offered a program designed to provide opportunity for communication and to improve ways of interacting and create a better understanding of each other's role.

SUMMARY

Taken together these four projects provide important information regarding families, children, teachers and educators who are involved in school based child care. The findings of the Baillargeon et al. study underline the fact that a very select population is using this form of care and the reasons for their selection of this type of care need to be explored. Her study also indicates that the quality of the child care and kindergarten environments seems to vary a great deal within and between schools. Children attending child care and kindergarten programs concurrently may be in environments that are consistently high or low in quality, or they may be in disparate arrangements. The effect that this may have on school age child care attenders is of concern. It is a focus of the study conducted by Baillargeon et al. and it will be addressed in future analysis of the data.

What an environmental rating actually means in terms of the relationship of quality of the environment to classroom functioning is an interesting

issue. The Montpetit & Jacobs study indicates that although two environments may be rated as 'GOOD' on the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale, the behaviours displayed by the children in these classrooms may be quite different. These behaviours (play style and tone of interaction) may be the result of very specific factors, such as the proportion of males in the class or the type of play equipment within each room, and may not be related to the rating scale items which measure the global environment.

Day care history appears to be an important factor in a child's social development. The results of the Adessky & White study indicate that aggression in girls seems to be related to time spent in preschool day care. The boys were aggressive as well, however, their aggression was not related to day care attendance. As two of the studies addressed the issue of aggression in children with or without child care experience, further analyses should reveal interesting findings regarding aggression and popularity, likeability and social competence.

The study conducted by Betsalel-Presser et al. indicates that there are substantial differences between those who work in the kindergartens and those who work in the child care programs. Age, training and experience are three of the more obvious factors. The extent to which these differences interfere with the communication between the teachers and the child care educators is under study. Betsalel-Presser et al. are attempting to increase the frequency of interactions between the teachers and child care educators by implementing a program in which interaction is facilitated and communicative approaches are modeled. They are currently analyzing their data to determine the level of success of the program.

The results that have been reported here are preliminary and are based on data from two years of a three year project. As the data of these studies continue to be analyzed, more information will be available regarding issues such as social competence, academic achievement, gender related behaviours, quality factors for school based child care for kindergarten through grade two, and teacher/educator communication.

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